SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

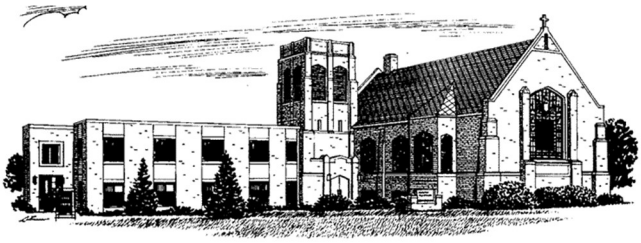
The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org
Patrick Blanchard, Vicar
Cell: 616-460-7150
Email: pblanchard13@live.com
Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Bradley717@gmail.com
Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday at Saron:
Fall, Winter and Spring:
8:30am Worship On-Location
11am Worship with Zoom
Nursery Available
9:40 Learning Hour for Ages 2-Adult

Summer of 2022 (beginning June 5):
9:30am Worship
On-Location and Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*



PASTOR ARTICLE FOR DECEMBER 2021

This Advent, during our Sunday morning worship, we will utilize four African American Spirituals to help us prepare for the coming of Jesus. Through this sacred music, and through the accompanying Scripture and stories behind the songs, we prepare our hearts to welcome the Christ child, not only in his birth, but in his second coming.

Saron's choir, as well as the Sunday School youth (Dec. 12), will lead the singing and/or telling of "Mary Had a Baby (Nov. 28)," "Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow (Dec. 5)," "Children, Go Where I Send Thee (Dec. 12)," and "Go, Tell It on the Mountain (Dec. 19)." Please join me in this time of preparation.

Pastor Joan

2021 Advent Schedule
DECEMBER 1, 8, AND 15
Wednesday Advent Worships at 7pm
(No Soup Suppers)
On-location & via Zoom
DECEMBER 12
Children's Christmas Service at 11am Worship
On-location & via Zoom
DECEMBER 24
Luke's Christmas Story at the Outdoor Nativity at 5pm
Christmas Eve Worship at 7pm and 10pm
Both worship services will be on-location & via Zoom
DECEMBER 25
Christmas Day Worship at 9:30am
On-location & via Zoom

Update in Covid-19 Precautions

Beginning November 21, we returned to congregational singing at both services, as decided by the council at the November meeting. There were no other changes to our Covid-19 precautions. We will continue to wear masks in the building and monitor the situation for appropriate adjustments.

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan and/or Vicar Patrick
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 8am-noon
Wednesdays as needed
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:15am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Richard Schalon is at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** and **Kathleen Preston** are at Woodland Terrace, Bridgman.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!
December 2021

Dec	2	Victor Coar
		Jason Crockett
	4	Phil Standen
	5	Alexander Breyen
	7	Adam Maly
		Dana Riley
	8	Lee Carter
	9	Piper Gray-Roll
	11	Bob Deaton
	12	Cynthia Brown
		Ed Brunner
		Gloria Hopkins
	13	Eric Standen
		Deborah Standen
	14	Finnegan Gray-Roll
	16	Caden Zwar
		Charles Pater
	18	Heather Pudell
	19	Jan Taylor
	24	Bernice Koski
	27	Oliver Fortenbacher
	29	Paxton Zwar
	30	Madison Dipert
	31	Kristen Harper

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!
December 2021

Dec	18	Dennis & Colleen Lundgren
	26	Brian & Marybeth Culverhouse
	30	Mark & Judy Wedde

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

SYMPATHY

We offer our sympathy to Jerry and Ruth Stelling upon the death of Jerry's twin brother, Jack, in Montana.

God is our refuge and strength.
Psalm 46:1a

BAPTISM

Willow Grace, the daughter of Aaron & Katherine Davis, was welcomed into God's family through Holy baptism on November 14. She is sponsored by Jonathan Gephart, Sarah Bauer, and Audrey Bauer. Berkeley is her proud big sister.

CONGRATULATIONS

Welcome to the world, Sterling Michael Carter! Sterling was born on November 4th to Kyle & Claire Carter.

The blessed grandparents are Joe & Kate Ulrey.

Looking ahead, we are planning for the 2022 Saron Annual Congregational Meeting to take place on **January 23 at noon**, after the 11am worship service. We will hear reports from each committee and approve the proposed 2022 budget. More information to come!

A NOTE FROM THE VICAR

Wow! These first two months have literally flown by. You promised to be a "teaching congregation" and you have certainly delivered. In fact, in many ways you have over-delivered. Visiting our homebound folks with Pastor Joan, participating in Church Council, committee meetings and Bible studies have all given me a good sense of who Saron is and how Saron works. You seem to be enthusiastic group of people who are very intentional about doing the Lord's work in this place.

As you may know, preaching is one of my passions as well as one of my growth opportunities. My goal is to help everyone connect with the gospel in creative ways that get your attention and encourage you to go deeper with God in the text. I appreciate your feedback as I work closely with Pastor Joan on developing my own unique preaching voice.

As the journey continues, "*Remember that God Loves You...and so do I*"

Vicar Patrick

As we near the end of the 3-year collection period, it's a good time to point out projects on our list that we haven't focused on yet but are still on our radar. For example, we are beginning to contemplate reconfiguring some of our rooms for potential better use. One question might be, do we need two multi-stall restrooms for each gender or would our growing congregation benefit more from at least one family restroom? We will also take the winter to think about and plan how we can best utilize the funds set aside to enhance our outdoor areas. Should we create a small, gated play area? So many possibilities!

At the end of October 2021, we had collected $361,412 towards our 3-year pledge total of $367,205. We are at 98% but with only two fiscal months left to collect, will we make it to 100%? It's up to us to dig deep, joyfully fulfill our commitments, and see this through to the end!

Worship

NURSERY

Nursery service is available during both services. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is most directed towards our youngest members and guests. For pre-school age children that occasionally need a little more physical and/or emotional space, quiet activities are available in the narthex. There are also clipboards with coloring pages and crayons, as well as children's bulletins, to assist kids as they transition into participating in worship. **It's vital to embrace having family units in all stages of life in our congregation and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The primary goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment when needed to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families negotiating life with children. We recognize that may not look the same for everyone and are always open to hearing concerns and suggestions.

For health and safety reasons, only the approved childcare providers assigned for that day should be in the nursery space during worship. Nursing mothers are always welcome!

NEW MEMBERS

Saron joyfully Received Helen Peters-Totzke, Claudia Staude, and Ed Staude (associate member) into membership on November 14. Welcome to Saron!

Please let Pastor know if you are interested in joining Saron, or would like to learn more about the Christian faith in the Lutheran tradition.

PRAYER GROUP

Join us Mondays at 11am for a time of quiet reflection and prayer, which includes lifting up the requests offered on Sundays at worship or via other means. We meet in the sanctuary.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday morning Zoom fellowship at 11am through the winter. The Zoom link remains the same from week to week and is at the bottom of the weekly email sent on Thursdays.

ALTAR FLOWERS

You can sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by calling the church office. Make sure to note any special occasion to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Please follow up with a check to Saron with "Flowers" on the memo line. Thank you for helping to beautify our worship services! Feel free to take them home after the last service and enjoy. Simply return the vase to Saron at your convenience to be reused.

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

December 5: Second Sunday of Advent
Malachi 3:1-4
Luke 1:68-79
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

December 12: Third Sunday of Advent
Zephaniah 3:14-20
Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18

December 19: Fourth Sunday of Advent
Micah 5:2-5a
Luke 1:46b-55
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45

December 26: First Sunday of Christmas
Samuel 2:18-20, 26
Psalm 148
Colossians 3:12-17
Luke 2:41-52

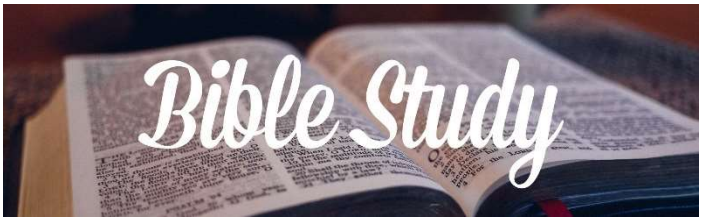
Youth

Saron youth met on November 14 for a laughter-filled afternoon of cheesy pizza and cheesier Pictionary. For our next event, we are planning a **Christmas Party for December 12 at 12:30pm** after the Children's Christmas Service. Join us and your middle/high school peers in the upstairs lounge for food and fun. You are welcome to bring a cousin or friend. Any alumni home from college are also encouraged to attend. If you're willing and able, bring some cookies to share with the group. It's guaranteed to be a sugary good time! Watch for more information in future emails.

Contact Merrily at merrilyannsmith@gmail.com with any questions.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.



SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We offer a time of age-appropriate Bible studies between the two services, from **9:40-10:30:**

- **Grades 5 and Under** meet in the Sunday school classroom.
- **Confirmation Students** (Grades 6-8) meet in the confirmation classroom.
- **Adult Forum** meets in the upstairs lounge.

At this time, we will be utilizing masks, per the current BCHD guidance. We look forward to seeing everyone!

We are always looking for volunteers to assist with Sunday School, even just once. Please contact the church office at 269/983-1273 or by email at info@saronlutheran.org with any interest.

TUESDAY EVENING MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

We will not meet during Advent but will resume on **January 4 in Saron's upstairs lounge at 6pm**. We'll have discussion until about 7pm about the upcoming Scripture or another topic. Those who wish will then go to a local restaurant for food and more conversation.

"Iron Sharpens Iron and One Person Sharpens the Wits of Another"

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast: 269-921-2786 or bobkynast@gmail.com
Don Hafer: 269-985-3637 or hafer.don@gmail.com

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Our next meeting will be **December 5th at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge.** We will talk about **"The Book of Lost Friends" by Lisa Wingate**. Amazon summarizes the story best: "*The story of three young women searching for their families in the post-Civil War South is paired with a modern-day story of a teacher who learns of their story and the connection to the students she teaches today*." This is historical fiction at its best. We will not meet in January, but will resume **on February 6, 2022** with a selection from author **Kate Moore, "Radium Girls."** Please join us at both events. Masks required and there will also be a Zoom component available.

Information will be sent out to all who have expressed interest in this group**. Please contact Kathy Cowall at (269)428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com if you wish to be included.** We welcome all who love to read, discuss ideas and learn something new. Join us whenever you can.

" *A good book is an event in my life*." - Stendhal

MEN'S MONTHLY DEVOTION AND BREAKFAST

Saron Men's 1st Saturday Devotion and Breakfast
Saturday, December 4 at 9am
Galley Grill Restaurant
4296 Red Arrow Highway in Stevensville.

Contact Dennis Lundgren with any questions at dennis.lundgren@me.com

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

We have concluded our fall lessons and will begin a new study after the holidays, on **January 6, 2022**. When it resumes, the group will continue meeting on-location in Saron's upstairs lounge and simultaneously via Zoom on **Thursdays from 9:30am - 11am.**

January's study is entitled **"Fierce: Women of the Bible and Their Stories of Violence, Mercy, Bravery, Wisdom, Sex, and Salvation" by Alice Connor.**

Women in the Bible aren't shy or retiring; they're fierce and funny and demanding and relevant to 21st-century people. These women's stories are messy, challenging, and beautiful. When we read their stories, we can see not only their particular, fearsome lives but also our own.

Please let Pastor know if you ever have any questions or need the Zoom link. **This class is open to all interested in attending.** You are welcome to join any time, for one session or for many.

Women of the ELCA

BAKE SALE

Saron Church Women will **NOT** be having the usual bake sale during December. The idea will be revisited in the spring of 2022.

DEBORAH CIRCLE

We will not meet in December. Plans for January, 2022 will be decided closer to that time.

Contact Melanie McCammon at269/983-4622 for more information.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex after the service? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. We are asking for donations of individual, store-packaged treats at this time. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month. These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger. Thank you for your generous offerings!

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen Mission: *To provide a nutritious daily meal to the hungry of the area, as well as to provide a safe and sheltered place for social gathering.*

On October 28th, 130 people enjoyed a sack lunch prepared by volunteers from Saron. Jim Manore, Jan Taylor, Vicar Patrick, and Dave & Kathie Bradley assembled lunches. Cookies were provided by Merrily Smith, Mary Alice Brunner, Ann Dosch, & Kathie Cowell.

If you feel comfortable helping to prepare a sack lunch at the Soup Kitchen or providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email to sign up or contact Kathie Bradley at 269/921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!*

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

You may be wondering the meaning behind the RIC logo, especially what some of the colors represent.
From the Reconciling Works Website (https://www.reconcilingworks.org/ric/aboutric/):
*"Reconciling Works believes **representation matters**. So we are excited to have a **NEW Reconciling in Christ (RIC) logo**! Inspired by the Progressive Pride Flag design, these updates to the RIC logo include the colors blue, pink, and white to represent our transgender siblings, as well as a black and brown stripe, to represent the fullness of our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Community brings to the queer community."*

But why pink and blue, more traditional gender colors? It's based on the Transgender Pride flag, which for many, is something new. It was designed by Monica Helms and was first shown at a pride parade in Phoenix, Arizona in 2000. The flag represents the transgender community and consists of five horizontal stripes. Two light blue, the traditional color for baby boys, two pink for girls, and a white stripe in the center for those who are transitioning, who feel they have a neutral gender or no gender, and those who are intersex. (Adapted from the Amherst College website.)

If you want to know (little or lots) more about the variety of flags and their meaning, here is the Amherst site: https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/Flags%2520and%2520Symbols.pdf

You will see the RIC logo on various communications and signage for our church. Watch for more updates about our continued inclusivity journey!

If you ever have any questions or need clarification, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:
Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church): 231/670-0328 or dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org

INTERFAITH ACTION

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

--Interfaith & Interwoven--

Want to get together, knit, and talk about what's unique about you and about what we all have in common? And also do good for people in need? We have a group for you!

Women of all ages (and handcraft abilities) from all faith and non-faith communities are invited to meet to dialogue about our traditions while creating hats, scarves, and mittens for persons in need. This group is similar to one that meets in Grand Rapids and the Berrien Springs Historical Society has offered to host the group.

If you have an interest, email swmichinterfaithaction@gmail.com for more information.

Support

The Support Committee will be meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at 8pm. Meetings will continue to be held on Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. Watch for details about when this newly renamed group will begin their work again and know that you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There will be a job for you to use your helping hands.

PIANO AVAILABLE

Do you or someone you know have need of a piano? Saron will have one available to a good home in exchange for the new owner arranging for its move. Contact the church office for more info.

If you would like to purchase a poinsettia plant to decorate the sanctuary for the Christmas Eve worship services, the deadline is quickly approaching!

Turn in an order form or contact the church office by December 1 with your choice of red, pink, or white blooms. Each 6" plant comes with a gold foil pot cover and is $7.

Checks should be made out to Saron with "poinsettias" as the memo. Plants can be taken home after either Christmas Eve service to enjoy for weeks to come.

This little piggy went to . . .

Malawi, one of the world's least-developed countries. The economy is heavily based on agriculture and the government depends on outside aid to meet basic and developmental needs. To make matters worse, a few years ago Malawi was hit hard by drought. At least half of the families in the villages were facing severe hunger.

The good news is, the little piggy took lots of his barnyard friends with him to Malawi as part of the ELCA Good Gifts program. The ELCA gift of piglets, goats, and other animals helped families in the villages to survive the drought and have a good chance to escape hunger for good.

Last year, the members of Saron gave generously to the ELCA Good Gifts program during Advent to help needy people in more than 60 countries around the world. This year, we are again offering the opportunity to make donations for an animal ornament that will allow the ELCA to purchase and deliver the animal of your choice to where it will do the most good. Like last year, we are keeping it simple by focusing on four animal ornaments:

Goat – $50

Goats can go where other animals can't, surviving in some of the world's most challenging terrain. Goat's milk provides nutrition for children and goats are quick to reproduce.

Piglet – $30

This little piggy couldn't be a bigger lifesaver. This gift provides natural fertilizer that helps crops grow tall and strong.

Honeybees – $20

Support farmers and healthy honeybee colonies with this buzz-worthy gift. Honeybees provide honey to eat, beeswax that allows a farmer to start a small business, and a boost to crop growth by pollinating plants everywhere they go.

Chicks – $10

Help a family spread their wings. Eggs not only provide an ongoing supply of protein-rich meals, they can also help start a small business and generate a steady source of income.

Look for an order form with instructions in the bulletin each week during Advent.

"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

As members of the ELCA, we believe that God is calling us into the world *together*. And with generous, loving hands, we *can* make a difference. ELCA Good Gifts is your opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs that mean the most to you and the people you love. ***– Saron Outreach***

December 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Advent Worship with Zoom Option	**2** 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**3**	4 9am Men's Devotion & Breakfast
5 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom option	**6** 11am Prayer Group	**7**	**8** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Advent Worship with Zoom Option	**9** 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**10**	11
12 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Children's Christmas Service 12:30pm Youth Group Christmas Party	**13** 11am Prayer Group **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**14** 8pm Support Meeting	**15** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Advent Worship with Zoom Option	**16** 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**17**	18
19 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom option	**20** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting	**21**	**22** 9:30am Help Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**23** **Saron Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen Day**	**24** 5pm Reading at Outdoor Nativity 7pm Christmas Eve Worship with Zoom 10pm Christmas Eve Worship with Zoom	25 9:30am Christmas Day Worship with Zoom option
26 8:30am Worship 9:40am **NO** Learning 11am Worship with Zoom option	**27** 11am Prayer Group	**28**	**29** 9:30am Help Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**30** 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**31**	

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
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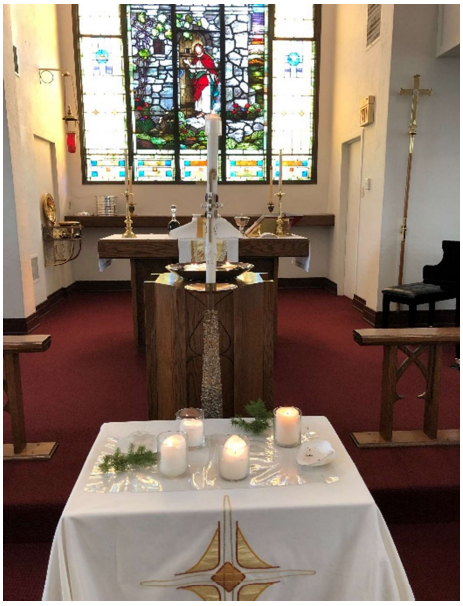
A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

December 2021 Newsletter



All Saint's Sunday

Reformation Sunday

Special Musical on Nov 14